# SEQUOYA•REVIEW

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# Sequoya Review

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**Contents:**



**Cover:** *Paysage En Gris* by Katherine Tate

## Spider Tales

1
Between the gunwales, anchored
at the ribs, his web would be
invisible if not for the spray
defining strands like lines
drawn by a pen nearly out of ink.
Wet through three layers of clothes
and cold enough to shiver, I watch
for the spider I know is drawn up
in some crevice, too stiff
and slow in this chill to check
on the tugs at his web. In a week,
autumn will immobilize him.
I've found him now, this spider
whose web bisects the boat. Hanging
from his line like a drop of ink,
his web, his cache, his universe
is moving up river to the drive
and drift of my stroke. As we push
into the rain, he twitches
and shakes from the impact
of droplets striking his web,
some slicing his lines like stones.

2
In grade school, I caught wolf
spiders, long legs, black widows
and froze them overnight
before I pinned them to collection
boards, organized by size and species.
The widows, would sometimes warm
up and revive, stretching
like my grandmother's hands,
carefully feeling the pin
through their centers as if
they could lift themselves off.

3
A woman stood over
the fast running Rheuss on a bridge
seven hundred years old, with placards
hung down from the rafters, each
showing a tradesman at work
while his double, his cadaverous twin
looked on or helped with the milking,
held up one end of the log to be cut,
whatever had to be done. She was
standing under a blacksmith
reshaping some blade while his death
stoked the fire and smiled, but
it's her look I remember
as she tossed her cigarette towards
the river. Our eyes traced its glow
as it arced up and stopped,
quivering just below the eaves,
over the rail, floating inexplicably.
She raised up her lighter to find
the butt half encased in silk
like some careless junebug.

4
Once, in the summertime, I opened
the door to my truck and found
a spider as big as the last joint
of my thumb strung in a web
from the clutch to the brake
to the wheel, as if he could drive,
as if he knew where to go.

*Richard Seehuus*

## War French

Finding the right word,
searching through small
books of foreign tongues,
French and German were
equal enemies, knives to the
throat, so you talked
among yourselves and wrote
letters home. There were no
words in German or French for
trench foot and no adjective to
describe shrapnel wounds and cuts,
the Sarre River swelling from its
banks like a tired twisted ankle
in a heavy wet sock.
At Christmas you wrote home,
told how you decorated a small, dry bush
with the silver foils from cigarette
packs, how you left your room
for coffee and came back to a mattress
split open like a trench, sliced
like a melon. This is why you always
drink coffee, you say,
making light. In seventh grade
I went to sleep each night counting
in French, *un*, *da*, *twois*, and dreamed of
Paris, poodles clicking their toes
on wet streets, wearing slick yellow
raincoats, cafés and towers.
Your *Français* was twenty pages
in a small red book, eight months
of your life, the beginning of war,
an introduction to the Alps and snow,
nothing like East Tennessee.
Today when I found a book called
*War French* in an antique store, along with
campaign buttons and dated promises,

I remembered your stories, and your gift,
a small chrome compact dusted with powder,
a map of France on the front,
each city a tiny gem stone. I look
in the mirror, the glass has darkened
over the years like smoke, like memory.
I have your dark eyes.
They read between the lines of *Bonjour*
and *Au Revoir*. They listen for a language
they have never learned and imagine
places set on a map like precious stones,
jewels dark and old, their names
written in a book, a yellowed book of *War French*.

*Laurie Perry*

**So Clouded**

A mind-dimmed treatise of stars
and gravitational pull, how your life
is dragged into reality, breathed out by flowers,
drunk on what is buried beneath them,
exhaling stale bread and water, dirt and smoke
you stumble through into the sunlight,
how your hearing clears for light years
and opens out onto the page. This is the
water you drown in, this is the desert you drink:
something moving towards you very fast, you see
the dust cloud boiling away like a burning fuse,
and nothing to do but wait the day through
into night, watch the emptiness between the stars
lift you from the ground and into its arms,
turn you around and show you the space behind
yourself. What can you do, so clouded,
but dig for that spirit clutched between the roots,
feeling the age in your nose, soil in your paws,
and asking yourself, where did it come from,
what does it want, where is it going?

*Greg Delisle*

## Amarillo, TX—Cadillac Ranch

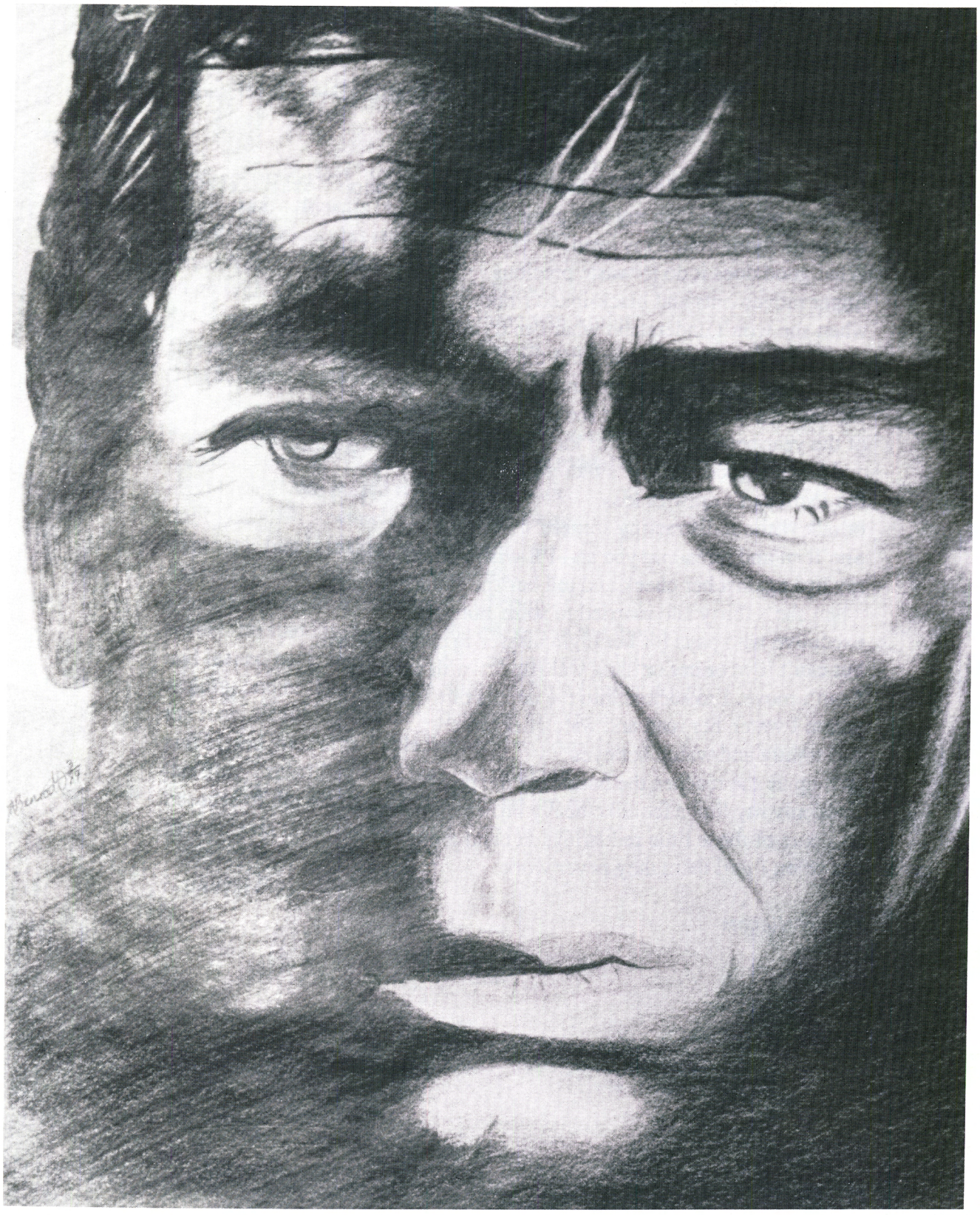
And you remarked, *What it is is*
*there aren't any kids in West Texas,*
and West Texas was taking its second day
since Austin. Refinery, oil well,
town with a co-op,—but I wasn't bored,
I was wearing your glasses, watching you squint
for any restaurant besides Dairy Queen. And
the Cadillacs stuck out of the landscape
like arrows, one landing behind the other.
You'd told me the guy took twelve years to plant
them, starting in '55, every year another model's
head buried. We pulled over, stood beside
the truck, then scwunched across the field
to put our hands inside one, to jiggle
the wheel. And this was all there was.
The graffiti made a background of couples;
we set the standby, balanced the camera in the mud
and leaned back against the '67, smiling, probably
making one of those footless shots. A little further down
the road, I caught your hand between my knees
and kissed your arm. Little further, I exposed
the film; I'm still sorry. I was just thinking
because of the mud on the dash; those are my
toeprints on the window. Let's stop for the night.

*Kathleen Berotti*

## Much Less

Meanwhile the earth's ever-persistent rotational motion
distracts me more than my hair getting in my eyes
and bugs flying round my head.
What good does it do to waste precious
finger movements and black-inked ribbon
when she won't understand what I'm trying to tell her
in a romantic sort of beat-around-the-Buick
way of looking into her eyes and seeing
she sees me when I thought she couldn't remember my last name
or the year before. She'll just kick back and read and go hmm
and say it's good and she's flattered,
but I still can't draw or kiss
or talk without distracting stutters.
She'll sit and reread maybe and I'll wish I could press
my lips against her cheek and tell her she'll understand
when she's thirty and married to some bore-all
executive who pays for her night classes in existentialism,
but can't love or cry or hang wallpaper worth a damn.
I can't move. I'm sucked into the depths of the bed
where I watch her read and watch her brow
furl tightly and watch her eyes
turn up as she reaches the bottom of the page.
Suddenly my limbs feel like heavy brown clay fastened
to a core of those little red strings in band-aids,
but when I pull them they never work.

*Robby Nichols*



*Michael Bennett*

## A Mother's Journey

*Estelle*

Been eighteen months since the murder. Been seventeen years since I last saw the person who did it— my son, Rafael. My son, the killer.

It's hard to think of him that way. He's still a cute little bug-eyed five-year-old in my mind, always will be. That picture I saw in the paper, though. I don't know. He's his daddy all over. Still it was hard believin' it was him, believin' he killed that man.

California's a long way away. I got to think if I packed everything I need.

Mrs. Rawley's going to water my plants while I'm gone, gone to see relations in California, I told her. Wouldn't she have something to tell all them old ladies she plays cards with if she knew where I was really going was to a prison.

*Rafe*

I had a funny discussion with the shrink this morning. Well, it started out funny before he decided to annoy me by probing my past, which is what he gets paid for, I guess.

He's an all right guy. Dr. Thorpe is his name, Dr. David Thorpe. Dink the shrink, all the fellows here call him. That's the nickname he got in college when he played basketball, the Dink part anyway. Or maybe it was "dunk" and it got changed— that would make more sense. Dunk Thorpe.

Sometimes he comes out to the exercise yard and plays ball with us, but not too often. He's probably noticed how everyone clams up when he's there. I personally don't mind talking to him at all. I'd rather go to his office and shoot the shit than sit around doing nothing, if those are my choices.

That's where I was this morning, in his office. It's a nice big office with plants and lamps and cherry furniture; doesn't look like it belongs in a prison. His walls aren't covered with diplomas, like you'd expect. Elrod says it's because it doesn't matter what inmates think, we don't need to see credentials, but I think it's because he's got walls somewhere else— downtown, maybe— adorned with his degrees. I was thinking about that when he started talking. He wanted to talk about talking. It was funny.

"I can understand when stupid people try to sound smart," he said. "But I can't understand why smart people want to sound stupid. Know what I mean?"

"Nah," I said. "I must be one a' them stupid ones."

"No, you're not," he said. "I've seen your records. You were an honors student in high school. You had a scholarship to college." He was holding his watery gray eyes open, trying to see through glasses dotted with little white paint specks.

"You saying I sound stupid?"

"No, you just sound false. When you say things like 'offin' some honky motherfucker.'"

The way he said it sounded so funny, in that clipped Harvard-edged accent he has, that I had to laugh. I snorted, actually. He smiled too, and rubbed his blond hair on top where it was thin enough to see his scalp, like he was embarassed a little.

"When did I say that, man?"

"I don't know, when you were talking to someone. just wish you'd talk straight to me. We could get a lot more accomplished."

"Only thing I wanna accomplish is gettin' out of here."

That's why a lot of inmates like talking to Thorpe: they think he's their ticket out. The parole board gets his report on everybody sooner or later, and rumor holds it makes a difference. Makes no difference to me; I won't be free any time soon. God himself couldn't get me out right now.

"What would you do if you got out?" he said.

"Work," I said. I grinned. "Be a *respectable* member of society. That how I should talk?"

"You're working now, I hear. How's it going?"

"Okay." No sense wasting time talking about folding towels.

"What kind of work did your father do?"

That again.

"I told you, I don't remember my father."

"I don't belive that."

"Believe what you want, man."

"Pritchard, I'm talking about. Not your real father."

"I never met my real father. I don't remember Pritchard."

Ralph Pritchard was his name. He wasn't so bad, for a white man in Mississippi in the 'fifties. Always had a cigar in his mouth, King Edward cigar. I'd have forgotten that except when I went to California all my crayons were in a white King Edward box. Usually you only see yellow ones.

He used to put us on his lap, Marcus and John and me, and tell us stories. I liked that a lot. Most of the stories were about big strong men fighting monsters, and the way he told them, the men didn't always win.

"Tell me about your mother."

"My mother's dead."

"No. Your Aunt Effie's dead. She wasn't your real mother."

"She wasn't my real *aunt*, " I said.

"Your mother's alive," he said. He took out a pack of cigarettes and offered me one, but I declined. "That's the reason I wanted to see you today."

"To tell me my mother's alive?"

"No. To tell you she's coming here."

Thorpe has good timing on his delivery. I leaned my elbows on my knees and looked down at my feet so he couldn't see my face. All of a sudden the desk between us wasn't enough. I felt him looking at the top of my own head, covered by short, neat Afro-style hair. My lawyer said it was best kept short.

"How do you feel about that?"

I didn't answer.

"Your mother wants to see you."

"I heard you," I said, without looking up.

"Well?" he said.

"Well, I don't want to see her."

"She's coming a long way."

"Yeah, that's because she *sent* me a long way off, man, when I was five fucking years old. Five." I stood up then, aware of my tallness and strength and youth, those things he no longer had. He sat slouched and paunchy under a wrinkled white shirt dusted with ashes, his hair mussed, glasses set slightly askew. My own prison fatigues were clean and sharply creased. I wondered why those things occurred to me at that moment.

"You do remember her, don't you?" he said, softly.

"Can I leave now?"

"If you want. I thought you liked to talk."

I walked around some, came back and got a cigarette from him. "Not about this."

"What, then?"

He waited for me to take a drag. "How about the dude I wasted? You used to harp on that all the time. Don't you wanna ask me something else about that?"

"What was it like in Mississippi?"

I sat back down. "I don't remember."

"Tell me about California, then. When you were a teenager. What did you do for fun?"

"We stole treads."

"That's a lie."

I shrugged. I don't know why I was blowing him off like that, he's all right.

"Well, this is going nowhere. You can leave when you finish your cigarette." He buzzed for a guard.

"I'm not mad or nothin'," I said.

"Neither am I."

"But I don't wanna see her."

"All right," he said, and got up to open the door for me.

*Estelle*

I didn't like the way the prison looked, all gray and dusty. And hard. Everything you saw was hard: concrete, steel, rocks, men's faces. This Dr. Thorpe fellow, though, he wasn't so hard. He talked to me like a regular person. He didn't act like he was better than me because he was a doctor and I was just some poor white woman from Mississippi. He wasn't even surprised about Rafe, being black and all, I mean, or at least he didn't show it if he was.

I tried to tell him how it was. Rafaelwas 10 months old the year a fourteen year old boy named Emmett Till was fished out of the river dead, his face all chewed up, because he'd whistled at a white woman. We was living in one of the poorest neighborhoods in one of the poorest counties in the state of Mississippi. We already had two sons, Ben and me, two years apart. Rafe came right on schedule, almost two years after Marcus. Beautiful baby. Brown eyes, olive skin, curly hair.... I have curly hair, that coulda come from me. But it didn't. Even though I kept hoping that baby was Ben's, even though I told Ben he was, I knew better from the time I set eyes on him. He was Ellison Daniels all over. Had his eyes. Had his smile, real sweet and— seductive. That was a word his daddy taught me, and that's the kind of smile his daddy had. I didn't say that when I was talking to Dr. Thorpe, but that's the word I always had in my head when I thought of Ellison— seductive. No, I never told nobody else that, never will.

Of course, I couldn't keep my secret forever. The older Rafe got, the more folks could tell he wasn't Ben's son. His nose was too wide, his lips a little too full, his haur— well, it was his hair, finally, that told it. He coulda got dark skin from being in the sun (although, Lord knows, I kept him out of it as much as I could), and who can say much about noses and eyes? Sometimes, there's a relative way back somewhere, looks like that. But when you put it all together, well... he just looked like he belonged to some colored family from down the road, that's all. But that was when he was two or three years old. Ben knew something was wrong long before that, before Rafe was even six months old, I imagine. So I told him.

I told him I was raped. I told him who done it, after he made me. It wasn't the first time Ben hit me, and I coulda held out a lot longer, but what was the point? I knew Ellison was long gone already. I gave him plenty of lead time. Why didn't you tell me, why didn't you tell me when it happened? Ben kept yelling at me. I said, 'Cause I didn't want you to go to prison for killing that man, that's why. No nigger, I said, is worth my husband going to prison for. But I cried after I said that, and I never used that word again, because I never thought of Ellison that way. Lord forgive me.

Lots of folks in 1955 did think that way, though, and not just in Mississippi. That's what I want to explain to Rafe. He doesn't understand what I did because he doesn't know what the times were like, he doesn't remember. How can he understand now? Things are so different. If this had all happened last year, I coulda just moved away and raised him up somewheres else, and maybe he wouldn't of killed somebody when he got grown up, I don't know. I just know I didn't have any easy choices at the time.

*Rafe*

The assistant warden's a son of a bitch. When he walked up to me in the laundry room I knew it meant trouble. My fingers just kept moving, folding towels.

"That's a good job for you," he said. He knew I'd rather be working the punch-press, but you got to be here a while first. At least I could sit down and do this. He stood next to me while I worked.

"Been behaving?" he asked.

"Yeah," I said. I folded and stacked, reached for another, folded and stacked. I had a brief vision of my mother with a laundry hamper full of clothes between her knees.

"That's not what I hear," he said. His voice was whiny, probably all his

vocal chords could squeeze out from between the folds of fat. The cheesy smell when he got real close, cultivated, probably, to make himself as slimy as possible, I thought must emanate from those same folds.

"I hear you've been selling drugs on the cell block," he continued, when I didn't respond.

"I haven't."

"Good way to lose your yard priveliges."

Keep your cool, I told myself. He'll take your privileges if he wants to no matter what you say.

"Something else I been told. What I hear, you've been refusing to see your mother. She's been in A Building all day." He took out a small blade and dug under his fingernails. "She's been talking to Dink and the warden."

The ends of the towel I had wouldn't line up. I grabbed two corners and pulled them taut, held them that way.

"What I want to know is," and finally now, his voice was getting loud, building up to preacher level, "what gives you the right to *refuse* anybody anything? What gives you any rights at all? You're in *prison*, son, not some country club. You're refuse yourself. Garbage."

He had to pause a moment to suck some air into his red face. I folded the towel very slowly. The corners still wouldn't line up.

"You think you're some kind of hotshot, don't you? Well, I'll tell you, Pritchard, I don't like you. I used to could spot a mean horse by the white in his eyes, and you'd just as well shoot him, because you never would be able to trust him, no matter how well you fed him, no matter how warm and clean his stall was. You've got that look, Pritchard."

His belly pushed out with each breath. It was comical.

"But the least you could do, if some woman wants to come all this way to see you, some *decent* woman by the looks of her— and God knows why anyone would, especially after the things you said at that trial—"

"She wasn't at the trial," I said. It was getting hard to stay quiet.

"Oh," he sneered at me, "what a proud moment she missed."

"You son of a bitch," I said. I stood.

He backed up, seemed about to say something, reconsidered. When I sat down again and resumed work, he said, "You're not worth fooling with, Pritchard. *Fragile*, the man says. Ha." And he turned and huffed away.

So he'd been talking to Thorpe.

*Estelle*

I asked the doctor if he could talk to me alone. I didn't like the looks of the warden much, too full of himself. The assistant warden kept standing around. He wanted to force Rafe to see me. I could tell the doctor didn't want to do it that way, and I didn't neither. So we went and sat in his office to talk about my son, but mostly this doctor, he just wanted to hear about me.

Why didn't I tell anyone when Ellison raped me? he wanted to know. Reminded me of Ben, asking that. Wasn't I angry when it happened? Didn't I want them to catch that man and put him in prison? Yeah, I said, yeah, I wanted them to catch him, but I didn't want my husband catching him first. Your husband woulda hurt him, he said. He woulda killed him, I said. Then this doctor looked at me funny, real hard, like he was trying to see the inside of my skull. You didn't want your husband to kill that man, he said. And then he said, You didn't want anybody to kill him. I didn't say nothing. I saw his eyes, and I knew that he knew.

Oh, he didn't know everything, though. He didn't know how Ellison made me feel when he told me my dress was pretty, or that my hair was shining like copper pennies in the sun. How I felt when Ellison sat down with me at the drugstore soon as I got off my shift and had a soda with me. Folks didn't talk about that much; everybody knew Ellison, and they liked him, and nobody seemed to mind if he came in that drugstore for a soda. Lots of colored people came in there; the owner wasn't from those partss, and he wouldn't abide with treating people different. Matter of fact, that was the only safe place we could talk. Once we decided to start meeting somewheres else, we had to plan it out real careful.

We had this place by the river that we went to a lot. Ellison, he liked to picnic. I'd just cook more than I needed for supper, and we'd have it for lunch next day. I had to be careful about everything, though; I couldn't spend too much money, or be gone too long, because Ben had a suspicious nature. If he'd a found out, I never coulda made him understand, not in a trillion years. I couldn't have said how smart Ellison was, how he liked to read books and tell me about them; I couldn't have said how his eyes got bright when he saw me, or how strong he looked in that blue cotton shirt he wore all the time. I couldn't have said he had a seductive smile. I didn't even know the word until Ellison used it: you're one seductive lady, is what he said to me once. I liked that. He was always happy to see me, and I liked that too, but I don't want to make it seem like Ben didn't appreciate me, or that anything that happened was Ben's fault, 'cause it wasn't. But it's true too that Ben didn't show it any more like in the beginning. Maybe I missed it some. But more likely I just couldn't pull myself away from Ellison because nobody ever made me feel as good as that man did.

Probably nobody ever made me feel as bad, either. The day I told him I was pregnant, all he said was, Did you tell anybody else? I said no. Is it mine? he wanted to know. Could be, I said. Then he said, I gotta get outta here. That's all he said. He didn't act like he was sad he wasn't gonna see me no more, he didn't want to talk about what to do, he just said he was leaving. Never told me where he was going. I felt like I'd never be able to eat again, and he never even looked sad. He looked scared.

Long before Rafael was born, I knew he was Ellison's. I knew it from the moment I told Ellison I was going to have him. But I never told Ben until I had to.

I remember when I was registering Marcus for school and I took Rafe with me. He was four. The principal, he said to me, You don't figure to put that other little boy in school here? And I said, No sir, he's only four. He said, Well, don't bring him back when he's six, either. There's a colored school across town where he can go.

I was too ashamed to tell Ben. Lord, He'd a been mad to know what that man said. The school superintendant stood behind the principal. I didn't want to stir up a bunch of trouble, did I? he asked me. Everybody could see that boy wasn't white. He couldn't go to a white school. It wouldn't be fair to him eitheer, he said to me. It was real cut and dried, the way he saw it, although he did say he was sorry things was the way they was, but what could he do? He was just one man. He had to do what was best for everybody. Think of Rafe, he said; he'd stick out like corn in a melon patch at the school his two brothers attended, and the other kids would make fun of him. Better, he said, to make him go to school with his own kind.

Ben and I had a long talk. And then another. And then another. It got so I think Rafe was all we talked about anymore. Ben asked me what did I want from him? He'd been a good father, treated Rafe just like the other two (that was a lie, but I never said so), and put up with all our friends talking behind his back. They couldn't understand why we didn't put Rafe up for adoption. That's what ladies do when they raped, Ben said, and he couldn't understand it neither. Bottom line was, Ben felt like he'd put up with things as long as he could, and the problems was getting worse. Go ahead, he said, put him in a colored school, and then we'll have all those little black boys traipsing around the house every weekend. Probably steal the radio, he said, when we aren't looking. And for what? he wanted to know. Just so we can keep shaming Marcus and John some more? And you? And me?

I always tried to cry where the boys couldn't see me. After I staarted resenting Ben I didn't let him see me neither, case it gave him some pleasure. He's the one made me go to that black lady on Magee Road. She had a sister lived out in California; Euffie, her name was. This Euffie always wanted a child and never could have one. She'd be happy to take Rafe in, the lady said.

California, I thought. California. Might as well been Alaska. I won't get to see my son no more, I said to Ben, and he said, That's how it should be. He wasn't born to this family and he's lucky, Ben said, I let him stay this long. I don't want him where you and the boys can go see him all the time. I don't want you in those places, where the colored live. Then he said, If you hadn't been so friendly with the colored in that drugstore, this never woulda happened in the first place.

My heart was breaking all the time. I'd watch Rafe sitting on the floor playing with Marcus— Marc was his favorite— and they'd be laughing, or fighting, didn't matter which, it broke my heart just the same. I'd have to leave the room. And then some days I'd look out the kitchen window and there they'd be, walking arm in arm, the way little boys do, kicking leaves and talking. Always setting off on some new adventure.

After supper in those days, Ben would sit in his big chair in front of the radio— we didn't have television for a long time— and he'd put Marcus and John on his knees. Rafe always sat at his feet. Ben and the two older boys would watch the radio while Ben's show was on, just like people watch TV today, but Rafe always just looked up at them. Sometimes I couldn't stand it, and I'd pick the little boy up and take him to my room with me, try to get him to play. But he'd want to go back in the living room with them. He acted like he didn't notice that he never got a knee himself.

I tried to make it all up to him, even before I did the thing. At first I spent every minute I could , while the other boys were at school, doing things with Rafe. Then I knew that was just making things harder. I couldn't tell him he wouldn't be with us much longer, and I couldn't bear to look at his face, knowing he had no idea what was coming. When we went shopping, which was his favorite thing to do, I'd want to buy him everything he picked up. He wouldn't ask, of course. He knew I couldn't buy much, but that don't stop a five-year-old from wanting. That prison doctor, he seemed to understand when I said I hated Ben for not making more money, and I hated Rafe for wanting things I couldn't buy, and I hated myself for hating both of them. It was my own fault, after all, I couldn't work half-days in the drugstore no more.

*Rafe*

School was easy for me. I got an education on both sides of the walls. So I can use words like *elan* and *erudite* and I can drop a man at ten paces with a snub .38. Either of those things only when I have to, though. I'm not proud of killing somebody. But I don't feel too bad about it, either; he shouldn't have come at me that way when I was alreaady nervous.

Marcus and John talked about school all the time, and I couldn't wait to go. Old Marc, he was a hoot. He used to take a slingshot and find windows to break. Our old man would've killed him if he'd found out.

John, I don't remember so well. He was four or five years older, and I guess he had his own friends. I do recall I was always impressed when he'd let me borrow his things, which probably was a rare event.

Lately a memory has started haunting me again. Five. I was five years old and Marcus was about to turn eight; I would have been six a month or two later. My mother took me shopping for presents. We bought balloons, a paper tablecloth, noise-

makers, and— my clearest memory— a red record player with a turntable that folded up and latched. 78 rpm. I remember hoping she'd go all out for me when my birthday came. It took us several trips to get all the stuff, a little each week when the old man's paycheck came, and we had everything all bought way before Marc's birthday. I was so excited, I couldn't wait for his party. But the most puzzling thing happened. We got on a train for California the week before he had it.

*Estelle*

In February I bought the train tickets with money we saved. Rafe and I was supposed to go the last week in March, right after Marcus's birthday. I recall that real well, because his birthday was what made me change the tickets. Close to tears was how I stayed all the time then, and I wasn't going to ruin Marc's day by standing around crying, but that's what I'd a done: I'd a watched Rafe having fun, eating cake, playing with Marc's new toys, looking forward to his own birthday in May, and I'd a bawled like a baby. Maybe that woulda been good. Maybe I'd a changed my mind about leaving that little boy in California.

Instead, I went back and got tickets for the train that left March 16th.

I didn't tell Dr. Thorpe all this, but I told him a lot of it. A few questions was all he asked. The past is past, he said, and too late to change it now. The problem is in the present. (I liked the way he said that, because it reminded me of something Ellison said once, when he was telling me about the history of the country. He liked history. Actually, it mighta been the September day I told him I was pregnant when he said that, I'm not sure now.) Anyway, the present problem was that Rafe didn't want to see me. He'll come around, the doctor said, he's just scared. Yeah, I said, I was scared too when I got the letter from that lawyer; I thought they was gonna haul me in court and make me look bad, say it was my fault Rafe killed that man. The doctor said it wasn't my fault. He said worse things happened to people when they was little, and it didn't make them killers; sometimes you just couldn't say what made folks do things. He said he understood what happened, and why it happened, and how I felt about it.

But he didn't know how I felt. He couldn't. How I felt riding back on that train alone, how I felt every Christmas and every birthday when I sent him a present and never got so much as a card from him. When Ben died and he didn't even send a note, I stopped trying. Euffie never liked me writing him anyway, her sister told me. So I stopped.

*Rafe*

When I play basketball I keep my eye on the ball. But yesterday I kept looking through the fence, wondering if I'd recognize my mother ifI saw her walking to her car. The parking lot was a long way off, and she might not have even been in that one, but I kept watching anyway. She was leaving that afternoon, Thorpe told me.

"You're not interested in your mother, right?" he'd said that morning.

"Right."

"Then you wouldn't want to see a picture of her if I had one in this envelope," he said, patting his desk. Fucking shrinks, they love to play mind games.

"Nope." I didn't look at it, even. I thought he might walk out then, observe me through glass to see if I picked it up when he left, but he didn't.

So then I was on the crummy court C Block gets to use, cracked concrete and a hoop six inches too low, with Elrod Hawkins elbowing me in the side every opportunity.

"Cut the shit, man," I said, punching the ball out of his hands.

I tossed it to Larry Selko, a skinny white boy from San Bernadino who didn't talk much. Then I glanced through the fence again just as that fool Selko sent the ball right back to me. It popped me in the head and one hand the same second Elrod barreled into me again, And then everything happened at once. I was on top of him, holding his ears, trying to beat his brains out on the concrete, and the Selko kid was pulling on my neck and yelling for a guard.

Then I don't know what happened. Nobody was touching me. I was sitting on the ground by the fence, and I was crying. Couldn't stop.

"What's the matter?" the guard said. "Solitary scare you?"

"No, you bastard," I said, but I was still crying. A bunch of men were standing around looking at me; things were bad enough, and then I said the stupidest thing. Something about Marcus's party, I don't remember now, but it was stupid. I still wanted my mother to come back for me, I still wanted to go to Marc's party. I was five years old again and I was thinking, What if she gets here too late?

*Estelle*

It's an old familiar feeling, this heavy weight in my chest as I go home. It ain't new, even if other things are: I'm driving my own car, not getting bounced around in some hot, dirty train. And I don't have to go all the way to Mississippi this time, only to west Texas, where I live now. But the bad feeling is the same.

Rafe was so cute curled up on that train seat. The sun was shining on his face and it made him frown in his sleep but I couldn't fix the window shade. I just watched him. His skin was sweaty against the plastic, that cheap stuff they use on seats, but he didn't notice. The train was loud and bumpy and smelled like dust and vinyl, but he was happy as a magpie to be on it. A train ride, all to himself. Something his brothers hadn't done. And then, to get to Euffie's, a taxi trip. He was real excited. He still had that dollar wadded up in his sweaty little hand that Ben had give him to spend.

Euffie seemed to be a good

woman. Don't wake him, she said to me the morning I left, It'll just make you both cry if he knows you're leaving. I never had told him anything. He went to bed still thinking he was just there for a visit, poor little fella, 'cause I never had the heart to tell him different. Euffie said she'd make everything right. Told me not to worry. Asked me for a picture of myself, for him to have.

I won't come back to the prison till he says he'll see me. Doctor says it shouldn't take long. Rafe won't get the story right till he gets it from me, and I won't die till he does.

But God, what I'd give to go back and change it all, to have that little boy seated next to me on that train going home.

*Madalyn H. Fournet*

*Stacy Lang*

## Fragonard's "The Swing"

This is an essential ride in history,
thinks the bishop; he thinks
he represents the church giving in,
his eyes narrow as he pushes her toward
her lover. He wants to fall into the trees

like a dark saint, but here he stays,
bowing his head, now cupping
her silky bottom to push,
hoping to God that she'll fly right out
of the unholy grotto, and God, that

she'll swing back faster yet.
He closes his eyes to the crunch
of her crinolines, her rosy head
bumps his chest. Poor man,
it's not nearly that serious,

he doesn't realize
it's her lover's picture, poor man,
the lover covets this decadence—
the priest a hilarious afterthought—
and his wife, pockcheeked but fashionable,

is gone to Paris; he lolls
in his gleaming tights—ah,
the girl's squeals, the flashes of lace,
her blond calves.
And the bishop murmurs, he's a pigeon

cooing behind her, the lover
far below her small boot
like a cunning pup, she's gasping,
her underthighs hurt, the blue trees
swoop so she knows nothing,

she'd like to see herself flying
in this cool French jungle. She belongs
to almost nothing but this swing,
a foot higher and she'd be tossed
among us and breathless feel our envy.

*Cathy Wagner*

## Dollhouse

All these sucking babies
were beneath our feet,
tiny crawling insects
gnawing on their eyes
until I couldn't stand it.
You yelled:
Take them off, those unholy shoes.
Chicago in ashes. We were
the first American naturists,
breasts flying free,
and this dollhouse was something
for salvaging. I admitted
my attraction to ashes
(burning my toenails was a favorite
pastime you hadn't seen)
but I'd had dolls before
this national tragedy.
Perfect porcelain faces, sure,
but take off their clothes
and it's all a lie. Where were
their breasts? I couldn't do it,
be at one with nature, yes,
with these atrocities, no.
It's a long time now and I'm writing
from a friend's ranch home.
Thought you should know
that I meant to dig
my heel into your hand
when you reached down
to pick up that one-eyed doll-monster.
I would like to have been covered
in those same ashes, searching
for the other eye,
painting on some breasts.
After all, they weren't real.

*Yvonne Hart*

## All The Right Questions

If a hand reaches down
out of the blue crayon strip
at the top of the paper,
if it faces the house
like a face with two window
eyes, and if the hand
marches up the front steps,
balanced, of course, on
its index
and middle fingers,
will the wrist fit
through the door? And will
the arm twist
down the hallway,
around the corner until,
finally, the hand lies down
on the four-poster bed,
tucking its too large pinky
under the dust ruffle? And what
about Meredith, who holds
in her left hand a brown,
a red and an orange?
Who with her right hand adds
the yellow tear-drop leaves,
some perched on the tree,
some falling? What's happening
here—gravity, which Meredith knows
is the apple hitting Sir Isaac
Newton on the head. But what
does she know about
Michelangelo?
The blue runs off
the end of the paper;
that's infinity.

*Kathleen Berotti*

## The Mistake

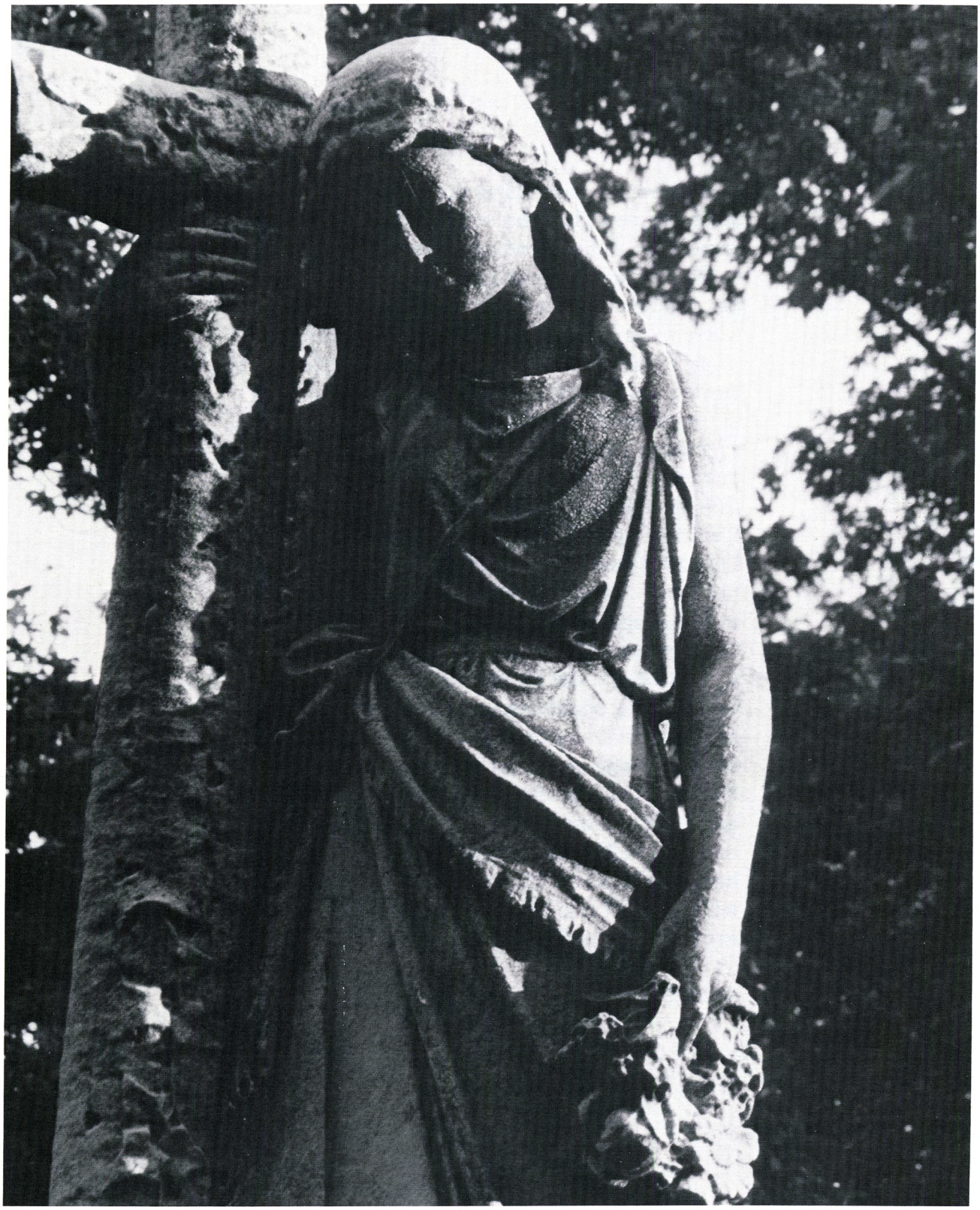
If your name happens to be Leona,
don't leave— your friends are
lined up outside your bedroom door,
waiting. You sort odd buttons
By color and shape, you sit
by the window, drinking tea, twisting
a lock of your hair. In the park,
a soft rain falls, umbrellas bloom
in shades of black and brown, somewhere,
a lost scarf soaks in a gutter. On four
different streets, four people
miss their buses at once. You sip bourbon,
losing track of how many place settings
you have. The phone rings twelve times,
thirteen, stops. The knocks on the door
are softer and sound like rain
on the roof. Four taxis drive by,
an amazing crowd of people
crosses the street together. You might
open your door at any moment,
your footsteps echo in the cold room.

*Jenn Brown*

## Truths

When I went to take your grandmother
out to buy new glasses, she said she was glad
to meet me, as if she had never known me. Your
family would joke about this. When I left later
that day I didn't have the strength to tell you
where I was going. I had become like so many
women who fill their day with half-hour appointments,
dusting and redusting their books, calling
the neighbors. Now, in Cairo, I keep finding
everything I didn't want to, everything
that pains me. The lid of a casserole dish
from the fifth century reads, "Ahmed is a handsome boy,
Sherifa is a pretty girl." What tenderness!
I had held your grandmother's hands in mine
like they were wilting flowers. I'm trying
to remind myself of how many nights I'd played
"card games for one," with the radio on,
walked alone under the stars of our tag lot,
calling to the constellations. My own grandparents'
fiftieth anniversary frame still boasts
the anonymous aged couple it came with, it's
the frame that's golden. Look, I never told you,
but the boy across the street, the most popular
one, the one I always wanted to marry, had died
homeless under the Choptank bridge. I can't
tell you why I left. There's nothing
to carry us through our losses.

*Millie Bentley*



*John Zimmermann*

## Inside You

There is nothing subtle about it,
the slow bulk and how your bellybutton
disappears. A trick of God with light
and mirrors, I feel it kick. During
sex we wonder which way it turns.

I find you in a picture, late
sixties hotel, hidden in your mother's
belly. Bottle of wine at the table,
your father in the room but not
in the camera's eye.

My feelings are swollen
like a nonexistent bulge,
and it makes sense, the lone mother
and for me nothing. But sometimes

standing to the mirror,
I see marks under my eyes,
and it may not show like you,
but the emptiness I carry
is ready to be delivered.

*Ted Howard*

## Prize Winner

### Thinking Back Of Home

The insane dripping of the waterspout
on the back window of your car
still echoes...
We lay back on the seats,
surrounded by the hazy glow of the dash lights
and the rings of smoke from your pipe—
the car parked against a loading dock
on the backstreet of the world...
and we felt that we were home there,
you and I, apart
from the deserted parking lots,
night moving traffic,
mustard-neon signs,
and the sleeping houses
along the way—
as common as streetlights.

*Christine Burke*
*Hixson High School*

## Honorable Mention

### Secret Worlds

I miss the fireflies
I kept confined in a Prego
Spaghetti jar in 1984.
I was trying to learn the language of fireflies
that said where all the crickets hide,
where all the katy dids hide,
where all those sounds come from
that we hear but never see.
Their darkness tells us what we can't understand.
Their light tells us what we don't want to know.
They tell us about the secret worlds of opossums
that stare us down in the roads at night
with their blinded eyes
too frightened to move out of the way.
They tell us why we have to imagine
the frightening world of trolls.
They won't let us hide in the dark.
They remind us that we are still here.
They tell us what the lonely boy thinks.
He's sitting in a cell, observed,
where no one will turn the light off.
Come back, lights from another world
trying to enter ours.
Come back.
Tell us what we can't understand.

*Amy Jackson*
*Notre Dame High School*

## Water Leaves The Place We Call Home

Memories slip like minnows.
They escape the nets you and your
grandfather dragged along the creek—
*seining*. As a young boy you
learned to trust the muddy waters
as long as he was there with you
in his tall rubber boots.
Your hands longed to be his hands,
strong and quick with the ropes and gear.

You remember those days as summer,
long days when the light of the sun
promised more time. He is gone now
the way water leaves the place we call home,
passing like seed in the wind, like soil,
silt and clay lifted from the river's banks.

Stumbling along the back woods of his
home place twenty years later, you find the
gas refrigerator he used as a worm bed,
rusted into the ground like a tomb.

Suddenly like a catch, the memory comes,
your grandfather feeding the worms corn meal
and grease, his silver minnow bucket,
the catalpa worms he tore from their nests
in trees. And you want to tell me everything.

We've already unfolded the paper map,
pointed to words that named the places
you drifted in boats, *here* and *here*.
*Listen, I have so much to tell you.*

*Laurie Perry*

## Walking The Circumference Of Lake Bled

Alone, I walk the bounds of the lake
at sunset to remember the nights
we've been keeping with red wine,
Dingac and Blatina.

Instead, strains of accordion
music follow, fishermen reel in
their dinner, and rowers push boats
into graying water for a last round
of measure against each other.

The bell of Bled Island, which we
pulled yesterday with a wish,
whirls the close of day toward me.
For a moment I stop and watch
the fog drift over snow-capped
Alps before it fastens itself
into the night's shadow that grows
lonely on the shore.

Halfway around, the last rays of sun
discover flowers I cannot name and
the opposite shore looks tangibly
cold and fresh. Even the swans here
are lonely. They walk up on the short
grass to nip feathery gooseflowers
and to mingle for bits of bread.

A woman calls for her children to the wooden
house I pass and the bulbed light glowing
through the carved balcony calls them,
not me, for dumplings, sausage, and wine.

Pulled by the wish to catch you on the way
to Venice, I hurry to the horse-drawn
carriage, lean against the soft worn seats
and imagine gliding behind the Alps
like the sounds of the lake, darkening
my memory, keeping our nights.

*Helga K. Kidder*

*Mary Zelle*

## Purgatory

All right. I'll tell you the whole story.

Yes, my truck, Kevin and Robin, the wreck, everything. I don't know why you think it's so important though. I mean, I didn't try to dust myself because of an accident that happened over a year ago, and wasn't even my fault. It's not the reason.

There really isn't a reason. I've already told you, falling asleep in my truck with the motor running was a stupid accident.

I don't want to die.

Okay, okay. Where do you want me to start?

My truck? Fine.

It's beautiful. Sixty-three Chevy. Stepside. My dad found it on a farm just east of town. Didn't run. Farmer said it hadn't run in five years. I didn't care. Anybody could see, it had potential. Sitting under that shed, with five years of dirt, I could already see it finished.

We towed it home and I started working on it right away. I had six months till I could get my license and I wanted her ready to roll.

A lot of work?

Yeah, it needed everything. Motor, paint, full interior. I was lucky, though. The body was straight, and no rust on it anywhere. That was something because sixty-three's are bad about rusting around the steps on the fenders, and right below the windshield around the air intakes. I couldn't have ever finished it if I'd had to do a bunch of bodywork.

My friend, Jerry, his older brother knew a guy who had a three-fifty out of a sixty-nine 'vette that had gotten wiped out. It was an LT-1, the hot small block with three hundred and seventy horsepower, and had a Borg-Warner four-speed with it. Bought the works for four hundred dollars, less a carburetor.

I found a six-fifty Holley, that's a four barrel carb that pumps six hundred and fifty cubic feet per minute of mixture, found it in a junk yard in Bakewell. My engine even had the right manifold for it. Bolted right on.

It took us most all of a weekend to change motors out. Me, Jerry, and our friend, Ron, did all the work—used this big oak tree in my back yard for an engine stand—and Jerry's brother, Randy, told us what to do.

I'm not boring you with all this am I, Doc?

All right.

By late Sunday afternoon we had her running. And I mean she would run. We'd put dual Morrosso headers on, and cherry bombs for mufflers, you just can't believe how sweet that thing sounded once Randy got the timing set right. She really hit a lick, sitting there idling, her cam ticking away like one of those metronomes you use to keep time on the piano. Just tick, tick, tick, and the low rumble from that exhaust playing right in time.

And when you'd lay open the throttle—she's got a good stiff throttle spring so you know there's plenty of meat under your right foot—when you'd lay it open, that Holley would open up, and you'd hear it sucking air like a vacuum cleaner with no hose, and there'd be so much gas trying to run through those four big barrels that the fumes would make your eyes water for just a second while the spark tried to catch up to the carburetor.

The revs would build right away, as soon as you gave her the gas, not like these new cars, with smog pumps and everything, that LT-1 revs right now.

I guess the thing that got me most, and still does, was the sound. That loping idle, with the cam ticking, and as the revs would build, still off key, running a little rich, getting louder and louder, till she hit thirty-five hundred r.p.m.'s.

That's where the motor comes on the cam, thirty-five hundred. You can tell, too, because all of a sudden everything is smooth, all the cylinders firing right in time, and you don't smell gas anymore, and the loud rumble changes to a shriek, like a big bore motorcycle running wide open. I tell you, I hear that sound and it gives me chills. It's so pure.

That Sunday, when we ran it for the first time, it was a religious experience for me. I don't mean like church religion, exactly. I mean I felt like me and the truck, we were one, or something. You just had to be there, feeling every cylinder fire through the seat, and smelling the new gaskets burning in, and your heart beating along with the cam. A religious experience.

It took a couple of more weekends to get it driveable. There were a lot of small things that you never think about: adjusting all the linkages, wiring up the lights, things like that.

After I had her ready to travel, I started on the bodywork. Every spare minute I had I was sanding that body. First dry sand with a coarse paper, then wet sand with a finer one, then go over it again with a six hundred grit paper. I went over the whole truck twice just in case I missed any spots the first time.

When all the sanding was done I took her to my friend Tommy Simm's house. His older brother has a paint shop in their garage. He's a real perfectionist, I'll tell you what. Virgil—that's Tommy's brother—took some real bright lights, like a photographer uses, and shined them on the truck. Only he didn't shine them straight at it, he pointed them at an angle, along the truck. He said that simulated sunlight. Then he took a small air sander till the tiny ripple was gone. Did the whole truck like that, even the bed.

Virgil sprayed it black, with clear coat over it. It's one of the best paint jobs you'll ever see. I mean, it is so black that when I wash it and give it a good wax, it's like the truck disappears. It's so shiny, like a big mirror. If it's parked on grass, all you see is grass. And if I park it on the driveway it looks like the concrete runs right through it.

I could show you, but the truck is dirty. I haven't washed it since the wreck, because it has a big dent in the front fender, and I've been waiting to drive it until I can afford to have it fixed.

Not driveable? No, I could still drive it. It's not that big a dent. But everybody's used to seeing it perfect. Driving it with the dent would just make it look like an old truck. I couldn't stand that.

Kevin? Kevin Wilson was a jerk. Don't get me wrong, I didn't hate him, sometimes I thought we were friends. But usually he was a jerk.

I've known Kevin since we were three or four, as long as I can remember, really. When we were little, he wouldn't play with the rest of us unless he was sure he had the best toys. Like if some of us were outside playing, Kevin would come over and see what was going on, and then he'd go home to get his toys. Only if he didn't have the best of whatever, he'd never come back.

Then, when we were in elementary school, Mr. Wilson was always our little league coach. And he let Kevin pitch every game, just so his son would be the best pitcher in the league. It was the same story in football, and soccer. Mr. Wilson was going to make sure that his son was the star.

But when it was just you and Kevin, he was a real nice guy. He didn't act like he had to be better than you, or anything like that, you know?

One time, it was the summer before seventh grade, me and Kevin were shooting some baskets at his house. We were playing Horse. Well, we're there, playing and all, when Kevin, out of nowhere, says, "I don't think I want to go to junior high."

I figured he was just screwing around, so I told him to shut up while I was concentrating.

But he said, "No, really, I'm serious. I don't want to go."

I made a real nice reverse layup, and threw him the ball. He stood there for a couple of minutes bouncing that ball, then he threw it real hard against the garage, and yelled at me, "I'm serious!"

So I asked him, I said, "All right, why don't you want to go?"

And he said, "Because my dad says I won't be anybody there. He says I'll have to work twice as hard as ever to be somebody." He even had a little sniffle when he said it.

I felt sorry for him, real sorry. I mean, I'd had his dad for a coach and I knew how he could make you feel like you were stupid, but I never figured he'd say something like that to Kevin. I mean, Kevin was better at sports than any of us.

I told him, "Kevin, you were our star pitcher all through little league, you were our quarterback on every football team we ever had. Junior high's going to be a cakewalk for you. It's the rest of us who'll be nobodies."

He picked up the basketball and did his reverse layup. Then he said, "Yeah, junior high might not be so bad." He picked up the ball and threw it to me, and said, "Thanks."

Then, the next day, he told a couple of the guys that I'd been the one scared and crying about junior high. He told everybody I was a pussy, because he was afraid I'd tell what had really happened.

That's the kind of guy Kevin was. Best buddies when it was just you and him, but if anybody else was around he'd always try to show you up.

Last year, when we got to high school, he was worse. He thought because he was just in tenth grade and was starting quarterback on the varsity team that he was a god or something. He hung around with juniors and seniors, went to all of their parties, and didn't know the rest of us.

And to top it all, his dad gave him that mint '69 super sport Camaro for his sixteenth birthday. That was just what he needed, like he wasn't already the biggest prick in the school.

I have to admit, that Camaro would fly, see, his dad had Cotton Goodwin go through the small block and breathe a little more life into it. But I always thought it was pretty ugly, dark green, even had a vinyl top. Nobody would've liked it if it hadn't been so fast.

After he got his car, he started dating Robin Reed. Yeah, the girl who was killed.

Anyway, Robin was a junior, and a cheerleader, and Kevin really thought he was a big-time stud. All we ever heard from him was how Robin would do anything he wanted. Total bull. In fact, it used to make me mad when he'd talk about Robin because she was a real nice girl.

I mean, I had a class with her—junior literature, see, I'm a real good reader—and we used to talk sometimes, and I liked her a lot.

I think Robin was the best looking girl I've ever known. And I'll tell you what made her so beautiful: her nose. She didn't have one of those little turned up button noses like every other cute girl. No, Robin's nose was, I guess you'd call it Roman, sort of. I'm not saying it was big or anything, I mean, instead of looking like a smooth arc, it kind of had a hump to it, you know? It came out from her eyes almost straight, then turned sharp down, to the little ball on the end. If you looked at her straight on, her nose was just a little bit crooked, went to the left just enough to notice. Her nose used to drive me crazy. I don't know, I just thought it was sexy.

One day in class, I told her how much I liked her nose. I said it gave her "distinctive" beauty. I didn't say it to try and make time with her, nothing like that. The thing was, we had gotten to be pretty good friends, and she was really down on herself that day, and I figured Kevin wasn't the kind of guy to even notice her nose, much less say something about it.

Well, she said I was sweet and all to say that, but I must be crazy because she had the ugliest nose in the school, and the first thing she was going to do when she was on her own was get a nose job. She was really self-conscious about it.

It's too bad. She was a beautiful girl.

I'm not trying to blame her, don't get me wrong, but if it hadn't been for Robin the accident probably wouldn't have happened.

No, I know that doesn't sound fair, and I'm really not trying to blame her.

You see, it all started that Friday, after school. The junior-senior prom was the next night, April thirteenth. Kevin was pissed because he couldn't take Robin, no sophomores allowed at the prom, and she was going with a guy named Steve Jeremy. Steve was a real nice guy, a senior, and everybody had been giving Kevin hell about Robin going out with him. The closer it got to Saturday, the worse Kevin acted. He was treating Robin like scum. He was treating everybody like scum.

Well, that Friday, after school, me and Jerry and a couple of other fellows were standing by my truck shooting the breeze, when Kevin and Robin walked by. You could tell they'd been having it out again because when I said hello to Robin, she didn't smile or anything, just looked up and said hello real quiet, then looked back at the ground.

Kevin, he stared over at us, trying to look tough, but didn't stop walking.

Jerry was right in the middle of a joke when they came by, so when they went past, he finished telling it, and we all started laughing.

I guess Kevin thought we were laughing at him, because he turned around and hollered, "Hey, Compton, why don't you give that ugly tank back to the army?".

I know it wasn't much to get mad about, but I was already sore at him for being so mean to Robin. So when he said that about my truck it really set me off. I told him, I said, "You're just ticked because everybody's going to get some this weekend but you. Even Steve."

As soon as I said it, I was sorry. I didn't think. I mean, I wanted to get Kevin, but I shouldn't have ever said anything like that about Robin. I'd have hit anybody else if they'd have said that.

Damn. That was the last thing I ever said to Robin. I never even had a chance to tell her I was sorry.

They just got in his car, and he burned rubber all the way out of the parking lot. I swear, Kevin was too immature to ride a bicycle.

It was about eleven-thirty that night when we saw Kevin and Robin again. Me and Jerry had been to the movies and I was driving him home. We were waiting at the stop light on Germantown, where South Terrace starts, you know, the three-lane the runs next to the interstate?

Yeah. Well, we were waiting there to turn onto Terrace, when I see Kevin's Camaro pull up behind us.

I told Jerry that we'd show him who drove a tank, and when the light turned green I really jumped on it. I mean we fishtailed around that corner and my left rear tire smoked for a hundred feet. It was turning so fast that it wasn't hardly even squealing, but boy, you could smell the rubber burning.

Well Kevin, he wasn't about to let anybody show up his car, especially not me. So he came around that corner sideways and stayed that way all the way up that first short hill.

After you top that first little hill, there's a pretty long downhill, you know, and then it goes up a steep rise. I knew we had a good lead when we started down the long straight, but I knew Kevin's car could take us flat out, so I kept my foot in it.

Jerry was looking back, and kept hollering that they were gaining on us. Even if his car was faster, I wanted Kevin to know who was a better driver, so when they got beside us, I jerked the truck towards his car. He chickened, just like I thought he would, and let off.

I still didn't back off, so when we hit the dip at the bottom, and started up that next little hill, we were doing about ninety-five or so.

Kevin and Robin were right beside us as we started over that rise. I looked over and it looked like Robin was trying to get him to slow down. I guess she was really scared. But he was pushing her away, and I saw him look at her and tell her to shut up.

Well, that made me even madder, and I was just about to try and get him to chicken again, when he did it to me. The thing was, though, I was ready for it and I didn't swerve.

I don't know, I guess Kevin couldn't handle his car too well going that fast, because our front fenders hit, and he lost control, and while I was trying to hold the truck straight and get it stopped I heard a loud explosion, and Jerry said, "Oh shit."

The rest of that night isn't too clear. I mean, I remember lots of bits and pieces, but I don't know exactly when they happened or what went on in between.

For instance, I remember seeing the car for the first time, but I don't recall anything about stopping the truck or going over to where they left the road.

It was really unbelievable too, seeing that car. You see, where they left the road, right at the top of that second hill, the side of the road there is a steep dropoff down to the interstate. Well, they were going so fast when they went off there that Kevin's car flew straight out and hit a telephone pole flat on the roof, about ten feet off of the ground. His car was wrapped all the way around until the hood and trunk lids touched. The telephone pole was broken off a couple of feet above the ground, and the whole mess was just swinging back and forth on the phone lines. You could hear them creaking as it swung, and there was a hissing sound coming from the car. I guess the radiator was busted was why it was hissing, because there was a lot of steam, or smoke, coming out of the front end.

The next thing I remember, the police were there, and a couple of firetrucks, and a whole crowd of people just there to rubberneck.

I told one of the policemen what had happened. I remember Jerry was still just sitting in my truck, and he was crying.

If you want to talk to somebody who went a little off the deep end from the accident, talk to Jerry. I mean, it was weeks before he could even tell anybody what had happened. He really took it hard.

Me?

Well yeah, it upset me. I mean, two people I knew real well had just been killed. Later, it upset me a lot. But that night, all I remember is feeling like I was watching the whole thing on TV, like I wasn't really a part of it. That psychologist the school had me talk to a few weeks later, he said I was suffering from shock, and that's how come I wasn't real upset. I guess that's what it was.

Anyway, I remember mine and Jerry's parents got there about the same time.

I had just finished giving that policeman my statement when they walked up. My mother, whe came up and grabbed me, and hugged me, while my dad asked the policeman what had happened, then he asked him about Kevin and Robin, but the policeman just shook his head no, then walked off.

I wanted to stay till they got the car down. I don't know why, I just felt like I needed to see it. But my dad wouldn't let me stay. He just drug me by the arm to our car and put me in the passenger seat, then he told my mother to drive the car and he would follow us in my truck.

That's it. That's all I remember from that night. I don't recall anything from the ride home, I don't remember taking the sleeping pill my dad got from one of the paramedics. But my mother told me later that I took it.

That's what's confusing. I know a lot of things that happened, because people told me. But like I said, all I can remember myself is just what I've told you.

After that night?

Well, the next morning, when I woke up, I had the strangest feeling that I needed to call Robin. I mean, we were friends, but it's not like I would just up and call her to talk, you know? But that morning, I thought that I really had to call.

So when I got up, I went downstairs to the kitchen and picked up the phonebook and started looking through it. My mother was standing at the stove, stirring some eggs, and she looked over at me and asked, "Who are you calling?"

And I told her, "I've got to call Robin. There's something I forgot to tell her."

Mom put down her spatula, and walked over to where I was standing, and put her arms around me. She was crying. Then she told me, she said, "Robin's dead, honey. She and Kevin are both dead." And she pulled my head down onto her shoulder and said, "I'm so sorry, baby."

That's when I remembered the night before. So I ran out to the garage. And there was my truck, with that dent in the fender. When I saw it, I started feeling, I don't know, sick to my stomach. I ran back in the house to the bathroom and threw up five, maybe six times. I just kept heaving till there wasn't anything but air coming out.

My mother was going to call the doctor. She was really worried. But after awhile I got to feeling better and she left me alone.

There was a big story in that morning's paper about the wreck. Front page, with pictures. They told about the accident, and a little about Kevin and Robin. But they didn't give mine or Jerry's names, just called us two other minors involved in the street race. I don't know where they got that from, though, because the only people who knew what had really happened were me and Jerry. And I know I hadn't told anybody we were racing, and Jerry had been too upset to even talk to the police, let alone the newpaper.

It said in the paper that they had taken the car to Mosteller's Garage, on Main Street. So after awhile I rode my bike down there, just to see it.

Why did I ride my bike?

Well, I couldn't drive my truck, because it had that dent and all. And anyways, the police had taken my license away after the accident, until their investigation was finished.

So I rode my bike. Sure enough, Kevin's Camaro was sitting right there in Mosteller's parking lot. It was really unbelievable. I mean, they couldn't get the thing off of that pole, so they just sawed the pole off on either side of the car. So it was sitting there on the ground, rolled up like a taco shell, with that pole stuck through the middle.

Up close, you could see exactly how Kevin and Robin died. I mean, it was gruesome, sure, but it was also kind of fascinating. See, the steering wheel was pushed out through the windshield, and you could see the outline of Kevin's body in the outside of the roof where that wheel had pushed him into it. There wasn't any blood or anything, just a two- or three-inch deep outline of Kevin's back.

Where Robin had been sitting was a whole lot different. I kind of wish I'd never seen it. There was blood everywhere, all over the seat, and the door, and the dashboard. It looked like she must have exploded when they hit.

I almost got sick again.

You wouldn't believe all the people who stopped to look at the car either. There must've been a couple of hundred that Saturday. And for several days after that, there was always a crowd.

Finally, after about a week, they put the thing up on the roof of the garage. Old man Mosteller said he hoped it would remind kids to drive careful.

It's still up there. Drive by and look, everybody does.

You know how I took that week after the wreck off from school?

Yeah, well I didn't feel so good, and I really didn't feel like answering everybody's stupid questions. I mean, even after a week nobody would let it rest.

"Hey, Compton. If you can't beat them, kill them." Or, "Why didn't you go easy on them and just run over

them?" Or, "Why don't you drive a hearse instead of a truck?"

A lot of people were really hostile. Friends of Kevin's, or Robin's, or people who just wanted an excuse to get me. They painted crosses on my locker, or Rest in Peace. One day I left my books sitting on a desk while I went out in the hall, and when I came back they were all cut up.

And then, my first Thursday back at school, a bunch of guys from the football team cornered me behind the gym.

They had me backed up in a corner. There were four of them—Brad Phelps, Howard Guest, a guy named Lempke, and Jim Hall. Well, Lempke and Hall pull out a couple of pieces of pipe from their gym bags, and start smacking their hands with them, like they were trying to intimidate me. And Phelps pulls a lockblade from his pocket and starts waving it in my face.

And Hall's saying, "We're going to make you look worse than Kevin and Robin."

And I was really scared, and I was screaming, "It wasn't my fault, it wasn't my fault!"

And Hall keeps saying, "Take it like a man, you pussy. Kevin did."

I really thought I was a goner. I really did.

But, just then, Coach Hayes, the football coach, he hollers out from behind them, "Brad, Howard, you boys stop that. Right now!"

They thought about it for a minute, you could tell it was a real decision for them. But finally Lempke and Hall dropped their pipes, and Phelps put his knife back in his pocket, and they turned around and walked off.

But when they were walking past Coach Hayes, Phelps says, real loud, "But he deserves it, coach."

And coach Hayes says, "I know it, fellas." Then he turned around and walked off too.

That was the last time I went to school.

What?

Well, no, I can't say every single person was against me. There were some people who tried to be nice.

Like Jerry, but I don't know if he counts. And Mrs. Copeland, my literature teacher, she tried real hard to keep me caught up on my work, and she was real understanding when I had trouble paying attention in class. And after I quit coming to school, she came by the house every week to check on me, and she and my mother would sit and talk for long times. Mostly about me, I guess.

I never knew for sure, but I always figured it was Mrs. Copeland who arranged for that school psychologist to come and see me.

Yeah, he came and talked to me I guess four or five times.

No, he didn't help much. I mean, he kept trying to get me to—how did he put it, oh yeah—work through the guilt.

I kept trying to tell him that guilt wasn't my problem. My problem was the way everybody was treating me. But he wouldn't listen.

Finally, about the fourth or fifth time he came to see me, I was so tired of hearing it that I told him that him and his guilt could go rot in hell for all I cared. He didn't come back after that.

What have I done for the last year?

Well, I don't know. I've watched TV a lot. And I've read a lot. You see, I get several different magazines—*Hot Rod, Car Craft, Trucks*—it takes me about a week every month to read through them all.

Last August my family went to Daytona Beach. That was a pretty fun trip.

What?

No, I only got out on the beach one day. It was kind of cloudy that week, so I ended up staying in our room mostly. But it was good to get away for a while.

Have I done anything else? Yeah, my dad took me to a Falcons game last fall.

Sure, I enjoyed it a lot. They were playing Oakland. We had lower level seats on about the thirty yard line. It was really great.

Oakland's quarterback was named Wilson. And there was this good looking girl in front of me that from behind looked a lot like Robin. It was kind of nice, because I could sit and pretend that I was sitting with Robin, watching Kevin play ball. That probably sounds stupid and all, but I enjoyed it for a pretty good while.

No, I can't tell you how the game ended. You see, right at the start of the third quarter, Wilson got sacked hard. They had to carry him off on a stretcher. Well, we watched a couple of more plays after that, but the backup quarterback sucked, and you could see it wouldn't be much of a game from then on. So we left.

But till then I had really had a good time.

Have I ever told anybody else about this? No, you're the first one.

Why? I don't know. Maybe because all anybody else has wanted to know was whether or not the accident was my fault. Nobody's asked me about Kevin and Robin, or my truck, or any of the stuff that really matters.

Just like that stupid school psychologist. He kept saying I feel guilty because of the wreck. But I don't. I feel guilty because...I feel guilty because...

I feel guilty because I never got to tell them both that I was sorry for what I'd said to them in the parking lot, the last time I talked to them.

The other night? I don't know, maybe that does help explain it.

See, I've gone to the cemetery lots of times, to try and tell them, but I never felt like they heard me. So, I thought that maybe if I was in my truck, just like I was the last time I saw them, that they could hear me then. So I went to the garage and started it up. It was the first time since the accident that I'd started it.

I don't know that I meant to die, I just don't know that I didn't. At the time, it didn't really matter.

Now? Yeah, it matters now.

Well, because thinking about all this, and telling you, I've realized that, if we hadn't had the accident, even if I'd never told them I was

sorry, Kevin and Robin both would have forgotten about it by Monday, Tuesday at the latest. I mean, the wreck may have killed them, but it didn't change who they were. I know they've forgiven me by now.

Yeah, I think maybe it is time I went back to school. Of course, there's only about a month of this year left. Maybe I'll start back next fall.

If they'd let me, would I start back now? I don't know, I mean, there's still the way evertybody else feels. You know, some of them were really mad.

Well yeah, if I were in their place, I'd have been mad too. It did look pretty bad, Kevin and Robin getting killed like that, and me and Jerry not even getting a scratch.

Sure they were mad at Jerry too. But they got over it. It's different with me. I was driving.

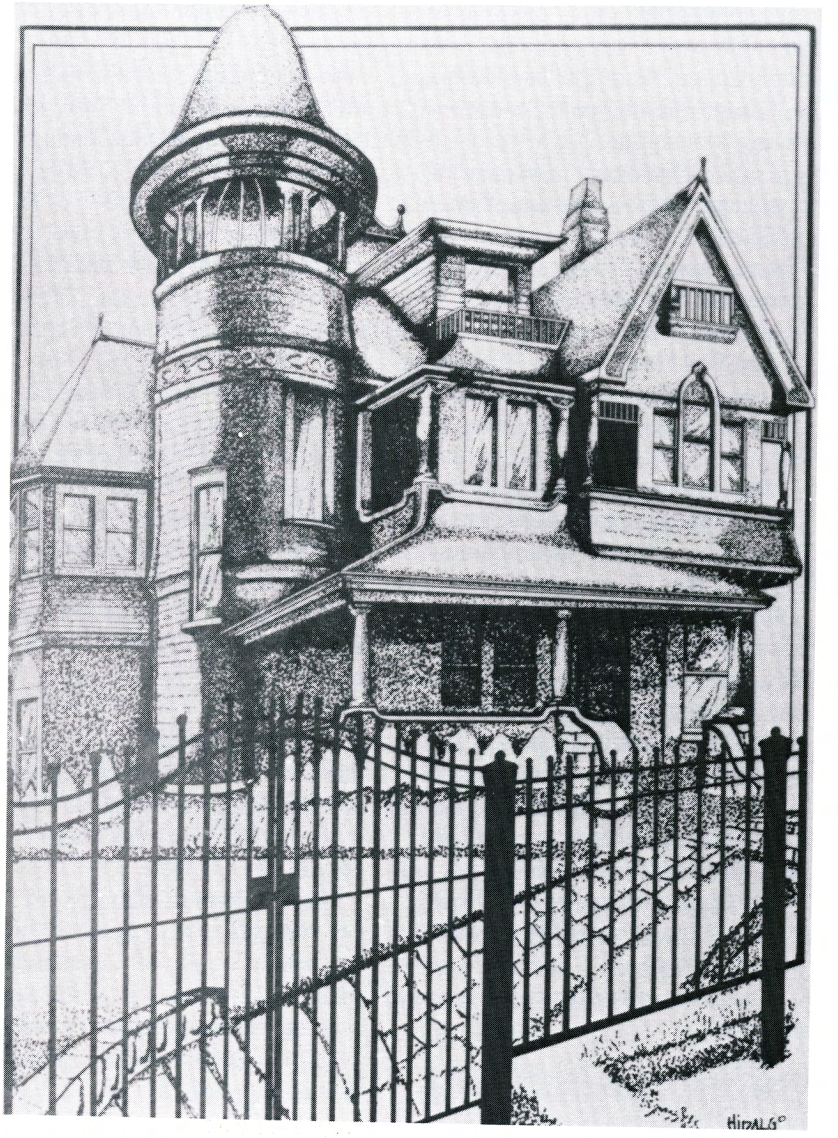
I don't know, probably. Okay, yes, if it had been someone else driving, I would have gotten over being mad by now. I mean, it has been a whole year. If I wasn't over it by now, I don't guess I ever would be.

Well, yeah, I consider myself about like everybody else. But...

Okay, I agree. They do deserve a chance. All right, I'll go back to school two days after I get out of here.

Why two days? Well, it's going to take me a day to get my truck cleaned up.

*Stuart Ellis*




*Christian Hidalgo*

## A Cow's Premonition Before Morning

*For My Grandfather—1974*

She was raising her tail
Pissing yellow all over the sky
Stomping her urine
With her cow hooves
Into the black
Pastures of space

The cat's bow bitched
The worst whine
Out of sequence
Rhythm and rhyme
With the flow and motions
Of the moon's displeased
Expressions

If sound had smell
Or could be seen
It would
Be cow urine
Dripping like melting butter
Across the seam
Of the yellow ochre night

The dog thought mischief that evening was
For drinking and being merry and
Howling and
Dancing dog tricks
So with his own
Encouragement
He lapped air like one large bullfrog sucking
Crickets with dew on their legs
Down his throat
As the cow jumped
Over the moon

Before Frank, her
Farmer master
Came that morning
To the barn
With the sleeping
Gas rag

*Pat Bates*

## To The Lady Of The Isle

Sappho warns that:
If you are squeamish,
don't prod
the beach rubble.

And I warn that
If your dignity is fragile
Don't clip your toenails
in front of a mirror.

You make these discoveries
in crackerbox bathrooms
where mirrors spread out
over the walls like sheets,
where you forget that even glossy reflections
can stub their toes on white wicker clothes hampers.
So on a whim and an ill-judged snip
you find yourself in that mirror
appearing, not pained, not bewildered
but instead simply stupid.

There are those who will deny it,
but silky-cold mirrors can laugh as loud as any man.
And sure, no one sees what lies beneath beach rubble,
or in the reflections that bump into what we are.

But Sappho laughs as her thongs brush aside
the rubble of Lesbos.
In the wind, she knows
that rubble litters every shore
and that toenails grow
on monkeys as well as men.

*Amy McBride*

## Ticket Taker At Abu Simbal

Here's what I would say to all of those tourists
if they ever asked. Here's what I found and know
enough to love. Here's what I would say to the photographers
and their quiet wives, the busloads of old women
who seem to carry busloads of postcards,
the wonderful girl with the yellow dress who asked me,
"What are their names ?" Little girl, I am watching
your bright cloth flit lovingly in space
between your parents, dart into the desert, then back.
The aging eyes of pharaohs will track you while they seem
to sleep. You can lose their life here, they will
seem to say. But holding your hand like a small nugget,
I could swish through their sands like they were my own
back yard, forget to heed their warning eyes, stone rubbed
to bone, lips parted in silence of sleeping cats.
I know these cold stones like neighbors,
feel I would turn on their house lights, watch their children
for them if they went away. "But look at Ramses," you said,
"What did he do?" He went out and left his wife crying alone
by the stove, his children fetching baskets
from the well while he circled the kingdom
like a greened vulture ready to turn on its own kind.
These are the messages your parents will never tell you.
These are the messages your parents would tell you to go sit
in the car during. Today, 829 Mohammeds, Marys, Fatimas
have crossed his path yet he speaks and appears
to know nothing. Nights, beetles scour the creases
of his knees and starlings scavenge for food in the cracks
of his crumbling lip. The sky looks as if it is pushing lightly
on his brightening face emerging from the weeds. When you
climb the hill above his kingdom, everything is enormous
and complete yet he is missing from some final,
terrifying, intimate picture. He'll never understand
the pain of this world, the pain of a light yellow dress
getting on a bus full of strangers, and never coming back.

*Millie Bentley*

## Shaving

Look, a little blood slitting out
by my ankle near the razor.
I wish I'd been that bride, plump,
blackhaired, who was sitting on Attila
when his brain filled up with blood.
If *he* was knocked down by sex, look around—
what'll happen to our men? This afternoon,
a brown Einstein of a bum's head
rose outside the deli window.
I knifed a carrot as he licked his nose
at me: "My men are mine," you said,
head down. I thought the bum
was charming. I don't waste time
being angry—good lord, what
with that pass-making ox of a cop
from this morning, your bullet
eyes, the seductive bum
at the window, me with mustard
on my skirt, I'd be bleeding. The hanging
plants there almost made it pleasant,
so I kept recrossing my legs
till every man there had that
crotch-itch grimace; it hurt
to look around. This is my last
warning: Just don't let anyone
look at me. If a thing's red or rotted
or embarrassing, I have it here
nervously in the bathtub,
but most days, most days I'm lovely,
and I don't want your men,
though I'm back at it with the razor.
It's only knowing I can have them.

*Cathy Wagner*

## Venetian Home

You've no idea how annoying you've become.
I thought: It would be easy to lose myself
here, the streets are dark and narrow enough...
But the incessant finding you at every
corner, your cheerful hellos—I may as well
have carried a map of you. I imagine you had plans
even before my move. I guess your scraggly head
was hanging over every wall, listening to my
faintest breaths. And the nights,
the lingering you insist on, all your romance
gone too far. While you sleep I run
to the sink, stare at the dripping tap, I feel you
stuck to me forever. Breakfast on a tray. Flowers.
There's not even time to brush my teeth. I've stopped
going out, I've stopped washing my clothes,
I left an eviction notice on my own front door.
Only waiting is left, and I'm afraid
you'll hear my breathing, see my shadow
crawling beneath the window when you knock.

*Yvonne Hart*

## Falling Trees

Last week, a hole appeared in the sky
down the street from our house.
Dad said it was bound to happen.
Yesterday, I woke to find another one
in the side yard. Breakfast just wasn't
the same, though it was raining as usual.
Mother was crunching her high fiber cereal,
and the new firewood floated
in the yard and down the street.
Now, the rest of the sky looks lost, torn
around the edges, like Mother
does on Christmas morning. She never
could say no. She and Dad have stopped
thinking. There's nothing left to do but fill
the empty spaces in their calendars,
complain about not having enough time,
and they've stopped looking at the hole.
There is too much light, too much
green and Dad took a picture to bury
in the bottom of a deep drawer.

*Amber Williams*

## The Fathers

I.
Daddy wears an alligator's skin suit,
It's leathery, stretches tight around
His waist, and he uses lightning bugs
Smashed against his eyeballs to see at night.
He hardly ever bothers to exercise
His lips for momma or vibrate his tongue
Which would cause words to expel through
His teeth, such as ooze.
Horse flies circle his whole body at work,
Like misery circles the stench of his life.
He doesn't really believe in God either,
But every year becomes more scared of hell.

II.
At night, during last minutes before
Sleep my step-father and natural father
Appear like prowling lions in the dark room.
Their manes and skin pulling against the
Burrs and weeds, talking to each other
About how they should have gotten rid
Of the cub child long ago, eaten the thing
As a feast; "you could've had one end and
I the other," but then they begin to
Argue, who would get the head and who would
Get the rear? It no longer
Matters, but instead how I can
Learn to sleep consciously, waking
Up only seconds before their teeth
Clasp my ribs and pop my kidneys.

*Pat Bates*

## Into The Wind

Go ahead, investigate a tomb
and the breeze that pushes you back
like a hand. Feel your hair fly
wildly, your skin pull tight
on your cheekbones like a death-mask;
this grave could be your own.
You and I will hold hands
to walk the bridge and again
you'll feel the gripping wind
for those few startling seconds,
before you remember yourself
hiding in your backyard
in the dead of winter, frozen stars
the only solid things, and out of reach.
But reaching the end of the bridge,
I lose you in the stream of faces
on the sidewalk; I touch my leg,
muscles working endlessly: maybe
I don't recognize your face yet. The air
is still, sweat collects in soft places:
inside my elbows, thighs, palms,
I am embarrassed. Blushing, I look
for catacombs to sleep in, I pass
the same landmarks again and again.
I've given up on finding you, even
in windstorms, and I can't lose myself
without mistaking someone's blank stare
for my own. The street is a labyrinth
of open hands pushing me away,
and there you are, alone and wild
in the violent wind, leading me back,
costumed, to shiver in the cold.

*Jenn Brown*

*Jim Kinsey*

## Apples

Apples, round and warm and fleshy,
they glow from the inside when you
hold them in the bowl of your hands,
they remind me of the fireplace.
Their roundness reminds me of knees
and elbows, their yellow, of skin.
On the tree, on the vine, on the ocean;
a young boy picked this one for me
in the morning, put it in a box
with my name. This apple is as old
as I am. It is older, and still fresh.
Apple, I bite into your sweet flesh,
I gesture with you when I am talking,
the sound of it enters my ears
and down my throat with a sigh.
I caress the smooth side, a bruise
that will be gone very soon.
Their smell reminds me of time
and pudding, their weight, of animals.
An apple is smaller than I am, and larger
than the sky or the ocean.
I have an apple, you see; I fondle it,
I eat it in the shower, I pluck it from
the sand, I put it deep in my pocket.
Late at night I kiss its shoulder,
finger its stem, cut it in half
to let the madness out into the world.
I have an apple, you see; take it,
here it is. There is a bite,
but take it.

*Greg Delisle*

## Walking Sunshine Blues

So he wheeled around
right in the middle of a slide
to some diminished sound,
and I don't have an ear
for this sort of thing but I
swear he had eight notes going
when he just quit to slap
the harp against his knee.
"Too much spit in the reeds"
he said, his jeans dark down
their length like he'd pissed
himself, then spun right back,
a quarter circle in his chair.
His wheels squeaked some
as he moved, and I'm not
saying it was music like blues,
but it sounded right. I bet
when he lays his fork on his plate
it makes a satisfied noise
the way some kids get away
from the table just by smiling.
It's like that. My brother can
add numbers in his head until
you're tired of making them up.
He's always right, we checked
him once on a bet and I won
eight bucks, but what kind
of a blessing is math?
I guess there were thirty people
waiting, not like they were bums,
either—all suits and skirts
probably missing their lunch to hear
where the tune went. Some lady
kept nodding her head with her
hair swinging forward and back
like she was holding the beat
for the guy, until he needed it
again. He picked up with that same
diminished sound, too big
for his harmonica, too big for a church
organ, too big for the angels looking down.
Some people could play a sidewalk.

*Richard Seehuus*

## CONTRIBUTORS

We couldn't reach **Pat Bates** because of his unlisted phone number, so think up dirty lies. Communications major **Michael Bennett**'s mob connections are known to most of you. Senior Humanities major **Millie Bentley** manages a Taco Bell in Hixson. Senior Humanities major **Kathleen Berotti** means none of us any harm. Sequoya Assistant Editor and sophomore in Humanities **Jenn Brown** claims she didn't have that collagen lip injection thing. **Christine Burke** is a Hixson High School senior with the misfortune of knowing Matt Cory. Naive-appearing Scooter dog and Sequoya editor **Greg Delisle** majors in Humanities. **Stuart Ellis**'s story was written by an infinite number of monkeys on an infinite number of typewriters. **Madalyn H. Fournet** finds solace neither in writing nor in her position as UTC Coordinator of Cooperative Education. French major **Yvonne Hart** is a sloe-eyed slayer of men. **Christian Hidalgo** sports the best name on this list and is a senior Art major. We Sequoya R. editors are the only people who really appreciate sophomore gremlin **Ted Howard**. Notre Dame High School senior **Amy Jackson** is the daughter of the famed Bo. Returning student in Writing **Helga Kidder** spent the summer whooping it up in Yugoslavia. The very high-browed **Jim Kinsey** majors in Psychology and gave up a promising career as the voice of the Ronco Super Automatic Turnip Twaddler television ads to become the chief photographer for the *Moccasin* . We would call junior Graphic Design major **Stacy Lang** a godsend of an art editor except that she probably doesn't put much stock in Him. Sophomore **Amy McBride** is the Sequoya Review's candidate for Chattanooga's 1990 Bad Man Competition. English major **Robby Nichols** asked that we not reveal that the Sigma Chis blackballed him. Graduate English student and sometime Circle Jerks drummer **Laurie Perry** had to take education classes this semester. Chemistry and English major **Richard Seehuus** flanks this magazine with his taut flanks. **Katherine Tate** is an Art major; we refer you to graffiti 'round campus. Sequoya assistant editor **Cathy Wagner** is home paring, filing, and carefully varnishing her nails. **Amber Williams**' color intensities are all off despite her standing as a junior theatre major/art minor. **Mary Zelle** is a very talented zwieback cookie for all we know. SWM **John Zimmermann**, a junior Art major, enjoys fireplaces and long walks in the moonlight.

*We regret that we cannot publish all submissions. Contributors who have not had their submissions returned may contact our office at (615) 755-4294. We hope that the contributors and others will continue to submit their work in the future, and we look forward to the continued support of the campus and community. The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga does not discriminate against prospective or current students on the basis of sex, handicap, race, color, religion or national origin pursuant to the requirements of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other applicable statutes. Inquiries and charges of violation of this policy should be directed to Barbara Wofford, Director of Affirmative Action.*